(b) if so, what action Government have taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) and (b) The Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Union Government (Commercial) for the year ended March, 1998 (No. 3 of 1999) (Transaction Audit Observations) was presented to the Parliament on 17.12.99. As per the instructions, the "Action Taken Notes (ATN)" duly approved by the Audit, is required to be sent to the Lok Sabha Secretariat within a stipulated period of six months from the date of presentation of the Report to the Parliament.

Oil Pool Deficit

1615. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total value of oil pool deficit as on December 1999;

(b) what steps are being taken to bridge the gap of oil pool deficit;

(c) whether it is a fact that this deficit is growing at a regular pace due to increase in international price of crude; and

(d) if so, what steps are bing taken to tap local resources for crude?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) The oil pool account position is audited on annualised basis. The cumulative outstandings of the oil companies and the Government from the oil pool account are estimated to be around Rs. 6000 crores as on 31.3.2000. i.e. the closing day of the financial year, 1999-2000.

(b) and (c) With a view to reduce the deficit in the oil pool account, the Government have taken a number of measures which, *interalia,* include fixation of the price of diesel on import parity basis, gradual phasing out subsidy on petroleum products and revision in the prices of petroleum products from time to time. The cumulative outstanding claims of oil companies from the oil pool account are likely to increase to Rs. 6000 crores as on 31.3.2000 from a level of Rs. 3,408 crore as on 31.3.99.

(d) Measures are being taken to increase crude oil production in the country through application of improved technology, better understanding of reservoir behaviour, development of new fields, additional development of existing fields and by inviting foreign and private capital in the upstream sector.